

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6948
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAL
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0358

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, CG, BY, RW
SUBJ: CONCERNS OVER CUBANS IN BURUNDI

REF: A KINSHASA 2959, B KIGALI 447, C BUJUMBURA 344,
D. BUJUMBURA 0348

1. WE BELIEVE IT MAY BE USEFUL FOR US TO MOVE TO
DISPEL WHAT WOULD APPEAR TO BE XAGGERATED CONCERNS
IN ZAIRE AND RWANDA OVER OPENING OF CUBAN EMBASSY IN
BUJUMBURA. WE FULLY APPRECIATE THE SENSITIVITY OF
BURUNDI'S NEIGHBORS TO THIS PRESENCE AND HAVE JOINED
OUR WESTERN COLLEAGUES IN UNDERLINING HOW ZAIRE AND
RWANDA ARE LIKELY TO FEEL ABOUT CUBAN EMBASSY HERE,

NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD TRY TO CALM THE
GOZ AND GOR BY PUTTING THINGS IN THEIR PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

2. WE SUGGEST FOLLOWING COULD BE PASSED TO THE
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TWO GOVERNMENTS: AFTER UNDERLINING OUR OWN CONCERNS
ABOUT CUBAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA; BILATERAL
CONTACTS HAVE EXISTED BETWEEN CUBA AND BURUNDI SINCE
THE MID-1960'S. FORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WERE
ESTABLISHED IN APRIL 1976 UNDER THE MICOMBERO
GOVERNMENT. IN OCTOBER 1976 A BURUNDI DELEGATION
HEADED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER VISITED HAVANA AND

SEVERAL CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION AGREEMENTS WERE INITIALED. IN APRIL 1977 THE BURUNDI AMBASSADOR TO THE UN WAS ACCREDITED TO HAVANA. FINALLY IN JUNE 1977 THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR RESIDENT IN BRAZZAVILLE AND ACCREDITED HERE CALLED ON GRB OFFICIALS AND REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED THE OPENING OF AN EMBASSY. THUS BURUNDI RELATIONS WITH CUBA ARE OF LONG-STANDING AND ARE PART OF GRB'S POLICY OF MAINTAINING RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THEIR IDEOLOGIES. GRB OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED TO US THEIR DESIRES TO STRENGTHEN THE COUNTRY'S RELATIONS WITH ZAIRE AND RWANDA, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF GREAT LAKE COUNTRIES (CEPGL), AND WE BELIEVE IT IS IN THE INTERESTS

OF ALL THREE COUNTRIES TO COOPERATE AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD ASSESS THE SITUATION AS IT DEVELOPS AND ACT ACCORDINGLY. AN IMMEDIATE AND PERHAPS OVER-STRONG REACTION TO THE GRB'S APPROVAL OF THE OPENING OF THE CUBAN EMBASSY COULD BE UNFORTUNATE IN THAT IT COULD MAKE BURUNDI FEEL ISOLATED AND REDUCE THE GRB'S WILLINGNESS TO MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTROL OVER CUBAN EMBASSY'S ACTIVITIES. ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, THERE ARE CURRENTLY AT MOST THREE CUBAN DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL IN BURUNDI. PROGRAMS PRESENTLY CONTEMPLATED CALL FOR THE VISIT

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OF CUBAN FOOTBALL TEAM OF LESS THAN THIRTY MEMBERS IN LATE MAY.

3. IF WE USED OUR GOOD OFFICES TO DISPEL EXAGGERATED FEARS STEMMING FROM IGNORANCE, SHOULD THIS, IN FACT, BE THE CASE, IT MIGHT HELP KEEP ALIVE THE TENTATIVE EFFORTS AT COOPERATION WHICH THE THREE GOVERNMENTS HAVE UNDERTAKEN.

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